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## Reauthorizing the No Child Left Behind Act: Top Ten House Republican Priorities

After decades of failed education reform efforts, coupled with hundreds of billions of taxpayer dollars spent with little or no success in closing the achievement gap in our public schools, the impact of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has been dramatic – and a positive step forward for students, teachers, parents, and taxpayers. With NCLB due for reauthorization in the 110th Congress, congressional Republicans are using the opportunity to continue making fiscally-responsible reforms to improve student achievement and close the achievement gaps that have persisted for decades between disadvantaged students and their peers. Below are the top ten priorities House Republicans have championed heading into NCLB's reauthorization.

- 1. Strengthening parental options.** Empowering parents with greater school choice is a key component in the fight to ensure students are receiving a quality education. By expanding parental choice, Republicans are encouraging competition to ensure the highest quality education in all schools – public or private. Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-CA), Senior Republican on the U.S. House Education and Labor Committee has introduced the *Empowering Parents through Choice Act* (H.R. 1486), legislation to expand choice for parents whose children are trapped in schools that show no signs of improving. Under the bill, scholarships in the amount of \$4,000 will be awarded to students attending schools in need of restructuring for the purpose of enrolling at public or private schools of their choice. McKeon also has crafted the *Improving Supplemental Education by Ensuring Parental Awareness Act* (H.R. 2203), legislation to shorten the wait for students who attend underachieving public schools to take advantage of free tutoring offered under NCLB.
- 2. Expanding state and local flexibility.** States and local school districts enjoy a tremendous amount of flexibility under No Child Left Behind. House Republicans support giving state and local officials even more flexibility to help them tailor programs to better meet their students' unique needs and priorities. With this in mind, Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-CA) introduced the *State and Local Flexibility Improvement Act* (H.R. 2577) to allow states and school districts to transfer 100 percent (up from 50 percent under current law) of its federal funds within certain programs – such as the Safe and Drug Free Schools, teacher quality, or classroom technology programs – between one another or into the Title I program.
- 3. Bolstering teacher quality.** Led by Rep. Tom Price (R-GA), bipartisan Members of Congress have crafted the *Teacher Incentive Fund Act* (H.R. 1761) to help states and local school districts design and implement performance-based pay systems that reward educators who improve student achievement and close the achievement gap between low-income students and their more advantaged peers. Congressional Republicans also support allowing principals at schools in restructuring to transfer their lowest-performing teachers, or refuse to accept less qualified teachers in order to improve their students' academic achievement.
- 4. Encouraging the establishment of more charter schools.** When a school is identified for restructuring under NCLB, one of several actions that can be taken is conversion to a charter school. Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA) has authored the *Charter School Enhancement Act* (H.R. 2904) to make conversion to a high-quality charter school a more attractive option for struggling school districts, along with reforms to the federal Charter School Grant program that would direct more funds to states that do not place a cap on new innovative charter schools.

- 5. Protecting taxpayer dollars.** When NCLB was first crafted in 2001, a key pillar of the legislation was “funding for what works.” Congressional Republicans strongly believe this pillar remains one of the most important of all. While NCLB has provided record levels of K-12 education funding for states and schools, it also expects more out of them than ever before. Rather than throwing money at the problem of low achievement in U.S. schools, which the federal government did for nearly four decades, NCLB insists that taxpayers earn a return on their substantial investment in our nation’s public schools. Republicans will oppose attempts to turn back the clock on education policy by again “throwing money at the problem” to avoid tough decisions or placate the education establishment.
- 6. Incorporating reliable growth models.** Under NCLB, states are required to meet two key goals: that all students are making adequate yearly progress (AYP) toward proficiency in math and reading at grade level; and that the academic achievement gap is closing between low-income students and their more advantaged peers. Under current guidelines, school districts use a “status model” to compare the performance of students in a specific grade against the performance of the students of that same grade during the previous year. Some have raised concerns about the reliability of this model. Congressional Republicans believe that a model which compares the achievement of the same students over time, within a well-designed growth model, may serve as a more accurate measure of academic progress.
- 7. Reforming the management of the Reading First program.** Reps. Howard P. “Buck” McKeon (R-CA) and Michael N. Castle (R-DE) have introduced the *Reading First Improvement Act* (H.R. 1939), legislation to codify key recommendations made by the U.S. Education Department’s Inspector General, who completed an investigation into the management of the Department’s highly-successful Reading First program. Reading First provides grants to states to help schools improve children’s reading achievement. The bill is the first legislative effort to protect against conflicts of interest within Reading First’s program management.
- 8. Establishing reliable and accurate graduation rates.** In addition to meeting academic achievement standards, NCLB requires public high schools and school districts to meet specific graduation rate targets. NCLB’s current definition of graduation rates, however, has left the door open to many interpretations from one state to the next. Led by the Rep. Michael N. Castle (R-DE), House Republicans have introduced the *Reliable and Accurate Graduation Rate Act* (H.R. 2862) to provide for a reliable and accurate graduation rate that captures the greatest number of student populations. In turn, this will streamline data collection and create an indicator that is comparable from state to state.
- 9. Enhancing American competitiveness.** In order to ensure a strong, competitive workforce that is skilled and prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st Century’s global economy, Congressional Republicans support initiatives that would encourage states to align their high school standards with those necessary to succeed in higher education and the workplace. Furthermore, to better prepare students in highly-competitive science, technology, engineering, and math fields, Congressional Republicans led by Rep. Cathy McMorris-Rodgers (R-WA) have introduced the *Strengthening America’s Innovation and Competitiveness Act* (H.R. 3242), which presses for a strong NCLB priority on academic progress in math and increases the recruitment and training of Advanced Placement teachers and a new Adjunct Teacher Corps.
- 10. Providing for “differentiated consequences.”** Not every school that does not make adequate yearly progress under NCLB misses the mark by a wide margin. Often, a school may barely miss its target that all students reach proficiently in reading and math because of one or two subgroups of special populations. These schools should not be treated in the same way as chronically-underperforming schools. Rather, congressional Republicans support allowing appropriate and flexible interventions to chronically-struggling schools that need the most assistance, commonly referred to as “differentiated consequences.”

**For more information on Republican efforts to strengthen education, visit the Education and Labor Committee Republicans’ website at <http://republicans.edlabor.house.gov>.**